

House Bill 287
February 1, 2011
Presented by Art Noonan
House Agriculture Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Art Noonan, Deputy Director, of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here to provide information on House Bill 287.

HB287 directs FWP to work with the Montana Livestock Loss, Reduction and Mitigation Board (MLLRMB) and USDA Wildlife Services (Wildlife Services) to establish conditions under which wolf carcasses or parts can be retrieved and when those parts could be made available for public auction. Under the current Endangered Species Act listed status of the wolf in Montana the collection and distribution of parts is under the authority of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Discussions with the USFWS indicate that sale or auction of wolf parts while they are listed is not allowed.

Once wolves are again delisted, FWP could work with the MLLRMB and Wildlife Services to coordinate the distribution of wolf parts. Few wolves are collected annually by FWP staff and many of those would be inappropriate for salvage as they are road kills or the result of illegal take. The majority of wolf carcasses that could potentially be collected for auction would come from Wildlife Services removal activities associated with livestock depredation response. Wildlife Services would have to be willing to collect and transport carcasses, which would add to their workload. We assume the MLLRMB would store and process any wolves received from Wildlife Services.

Online research indicates a raw wolf hide can be purchased for as little as \$20. Yet, the taxidermy processing fee can reach into the hundreds of dollars. The auctioning of raw hides or skulls would likely not be profitable for the MLLRMB and the processing of hides or skulls prior to auction could require a significant upfront cost with no guaranteed return.

Finally, the collection and sale of wolves harvested from livestock conflict situations could be viewed as incentive to lethally remove wolves rather than the use of preventative or non-lethal hazing techniques. This incentive could be viewed as an inadequate regulatory mechanism by the USFWS during future delisting consideration.